

Twice She's Seen Him Fall

by Astrid Goes For A Spin

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Summary: Go help the others. I'll be fine. Go.

Twice She's Seen Him Fall

****My rationale: you may read my excuses in the other GO. :)**

****This is a companion piece to the poem GO - far more elaboration. Although it's been quite a while since "When Lightning Strikes" (a suspiciously Harry Potter themed title, in my opinion, though I was hoping against hope it would be a Skrill terrorizing the village), this was written immediately after. Enjoy!****

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<p>Twice she's seen him fall.

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"Go help the others!" He waves her off, and biting her lip, she flips him a salute and swings away, leaving him bobbing on the ship deck. It seems hopeless â€" he'll never get Toothless free. But then again, he's Hiccup. He'll make a way.

She soars straight back into battle. She hovers just outside the Red Death's range, screaming encouragements and instructions, adrenaline pumping through her so hard it's almost painful.

They're not going to make it out alive.

A noise is coming from behind her - a high-pitched whine she knows well as a winged black shadow shoots straight into the sky. "He's up!" she screams. "Get Snotlout out of there!"

Desperate, he races up the Death's head, scrambling onto its horn and leaps hanging in the air for long seconds, then lands cleanly between the Zippleback heads. "I can't believe that worked!"

She punches the air in celebration, and almost loses her balance. Something is pulling her backward, tearing at her clothes and sucking her braid. Her knuckles are turning white from where she's gripping the rope lead for the Nadder. Her whole body is banging off its back, and she's panicking.

This is it.

A voice from far, far below yells, "Night Fury! Get _down_!" Suddenly, the air around her vibrates as a concussive explosion blasts a foot away from her head. She shrieks as she's thrown clear, tumbling through the air, the gaping rocks getting closer

â€"

Something yanks her up by her leg, streaking along with her flailing underneath. She can't really see because of the speed and her angle â€" just blackness - but she hears an unmistakable voice, "Did you get her?" And then Toothless ducks his smiling, toothless head to look at her.

She's grinning. She's never felt this exhilarated. She was born for this.

They swoop toward a rise in the rocky ground and before she can do anything, Toothless isn't holding her by her leg anymore. Before she can comprehend this, his hard, blunt claws are gripped around her upper arms and she's stumbling on solid ground â€" they'd turned her right-side up.

"Go," she breathes.

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"If you don't believe me," he rails desperately, "I can prove it!"

He races toward her over the uneven docks and reaches out an arm, digging a foot into Stormfly's wing joint. Easily, she grabs his forearm and yanks him up behind her on Stormfly's back. "I need you to fly me up."

She squeezes Stormfly's sides and they wheel into the air, carefully spiraling higher. Anxious, she hovers next to the ship's mast as Hiccup jumps off, almost slipping, steadying himself on the yard, still gripping the Outcast spear.

"Are you _sure_ you know what you're doing?" She calls hoarsely, her stomach flipping.

"Sure? That'sâ€|uhâ€|strong word. It's really more of a â€| hunch," he says, gesturing. Lightning blazes behind him, illuminating his face. "I'll be fine. Go."

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They weren't pulling up.

She can _see_ the tail flapping in the wind, fire eating through the leather quickly. They're coming in too hot " literally. They're dropping like a stone, and the monster is right on their tail. It opens its mouth to flame "

Suddenly, they've turned to face the Death, still falling, and Toothless is bent in half. Something happens that she can barely see, but suddenly the sky is lit up with harsh white light and the monster is falling.

They straighten out, still heading right toward the ground. She can see gooey, wide holes expanding in the Red Death's wings, and Hiccup and Toothless pull suddenly up, in the nick of time, the air catching them and bearing them up, past the monster's head.

The thing is choking on something " something glowing and burning and she squints to see it's _fire_. _Then_ the thing explodes against the ground and she screams.

Dust is everywhere, smoke, ash, heat. There' s coughing, dragons screeching, and she can see the two of them darting in and out between spikes on the Death's body as the fire races them. Then they stop turning. Something's wrong. What remains of the tail " a bludgeon bigger than her house " is swinging toward them, and then "

She can hear the sick crack as they smash directly into it. Hiccup is a tiny shape sinking into waves of fire, and Toothless is easily visible, black on red and orange as he dives after him.

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"You'll all see for yourselves! When I attach this metal rod to the top of this mast, the lightning will be drawn to it-"

She screams, but no sound comes out. Lightning streaks down from the sky and hits the top of the spear dead on. The white crackles and snakes down his arm, looping it once, and burns straight across his face. It expands and twines around another arm, all over his torso, his legs, the metal one steaming.

Then suddenly, the light's gone, and he's not bright and illuminated anymore. "HICCUP!" He's still holding that spear up in the air, a pained grimace on his face, eyes screwed up in pain. She can almost believe he'll open his eyes and call down, "See? I told you!"

Instead, his head rolls and the spear swings over his head. She can see his spine " his knees " buckle, and he's not holding onto the mast anymore. His clothes are steaming, and he falls, back first. It takes several long, soundless seconds before he plunges directly into the water.

She can't move, and she actually feels like throwing up. There are bubbles on the surface " he's so light, he hardly made a splash at all.

A noise " a painful noise " is grating against her ears over the crowd. Then she realizes " it's tearing metal. She turns, open

mouthed, as Toothless twists in his collar and suddenly flares out, standing on his hind legs, having broken though four thick iron rods and two muzzles.

He pounces directly between Stoick and Gobber and dives into the water after Hiccup again.

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She's having a hard time waiting for the dust to clear. No one can see, but she fights her way through the entire village, jabbing with elbows, punching and kicking everything that stands in her way. She can hear the chief calling, bellowing his son's name. Panting, she finally emerges next to Gobber and stops breathing so suddenly she chokes.

Stoick is kneeling next to the Night Fury " Toothless " his whole frame shaking slightly. Without warning, her eyes suddenly well up with tears and she gasps. Gobber rests his hand on her shoulder.

Hiccup's not there.

Toothless is lying, defeated, tiredly. Her eyes dart from his face " slow, blinking eyes " to the ruined remains of his tail. Even if he managed to catch him, they crashed.

It's over.

"I'm so sorry," moans the chief. Toothless seems to understand something, perking up slightly. He opens his wings, and reveals a small form curled next to his stomach, carefully gripped between both sets of legs.

Her heart stops. Pain digs sharp, icy fingers into her breast, and she tries to breathe but her lungs won't cooperate.

"Hiccup!" Stoick grabs him, his head hanging limply, and pulls him forward into a hurried embrace. Stoick grabs his helmet by one of the horns and throws it aside, listening to his son's chest intently.

And then he starts _laughing._

"He's alive!" He shouts. "You brought him back alive!"

Astrid doesn't _really_ know what's happened until she realizes that that light feeling in her chest is laughter, too. Tears stream down either side of her face and she wipes an arm across them roughly.

She's close enough to hear as Stoick rests a hand on Toothless' head, saying, "Thank you. For saving my son."

Gobber goes up to them, and she tails behind nervously. Then Gobber's voice " "Well, you know. Most of him."

Stomach flipping, Astrid edges around him. The first thing she sees is his face " two or three burns on it, devoid of expression because of his unconsciousness. Then her eyes dart down and see the

tattered fabric of his left legging " and beneath it, nothing.

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She can't feel her legs, except for a pricking sensation " pins and needles. She moans slightly, and Stormfly still hovers in the air, waiting. The whole crowd is waiting. Stoick and Gobber are standing right at the edge of the dock, peering in "

It's completely silent.

And then a black shape bursts through the surface, showering the whole congregation with waves of water. Toothless backs quickly onto the wood of the dock, dragging Hiccup by his vest, bunched between his teeth.

None too gently, Toothless bumps Hiccup with his nose twice. He doesn't respond, just jolting slightly from the impact. Stoick and Gobber race to him, grabbing him by his upper arms. Nothing.

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Toothless doesn't sleep for the entire day and night Hiccup is unconscious. And although she's not standing at his bedside for the entirety of it, neither does Astrid. She never gets to sleep that night, instead having to ferry more daring Vikings back to Berk on her Nadderhead. She spends the next day sitting listlessly in the Great Hall while most of the other villagers are hard at work refitting their village for dragons.

Hiccup would be proud.

Then, someone appears at the door, throwing bright sunlight into the dark hall. "He's awake!"

She doesn't have to be told twice.

She jumps up and pushes past the Viking, sprinting down the stairs of the hall and vaulting over the side to run up the hill to Hiccup's house. He's standing there, slightly wobbly on a shiny new metal and wooden leg, looking nervous and tentative.

It's the first time she's ever seen him without a vest. Somehow, he doesn't look quite so small anymore.

He doesn't know she's there until she punches him, making him totter slightly. "That's for _scaring me._" She crosses her arms as he frowns at her.

"What, is it always gonna be this way? Cause I-"

It's an impulse " for the second time, she grabs a fistful of his shirt and pulls him toward her. Their lips touch briefly " he seems a lot less terrified than the last time " and then she releases him. He continues his sentence dazedly.

"Could get used to it".

Gobber presents him with a package â€" the new tail and saddle he's been working on since he finished the leg. "Welcome home."

Hiccup grins gingerly up at him, trying to hold the saddle properly. He almost drops it â€" stumbling slightly into Astrid â€" when someone shouts, "Night Fury! Get down!" And Toothless appears, using many of the crowd as stepping stones. The last person wobbles under his weight, and he glances innocently at Hiccup, eagerly flicking an ear.

She turns to look at Hiccup, satisfied, and finds him smiling.

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She's been busy helping the others tear down the dragon perches â€" that's why she doesn't catch up with him until he's on his way back with Snotlout and Tuffnut.

He's laughing, and the conspicuous empty space in the village square â€" and the ropes trailing from each dragon â€" tell her conclusively that they've just been dropping off the Thor statue.

She smirks and nudges Stormfly, who immediately hops up and swings into formation next to Snotlout and Hookfang. Not really expecting a response, she glances over to Hiccup, who's already looking at her. He winks, then reaches down to Toothless and they shoot ahead.

Astrid grinds her teeth and urges Stormfly in turn. "C'mon, girl! We're better than them!"

Because for a long time, all she can hear is his whooping.

End
file.